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Los Angeles CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON THE
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

MINORITY REPORT

BY

BOB KARP

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SERVING SIX MONTHS THROUGH 27 MARATHON MEETINGS OF TESTIMONY AND ARGUMENT WAS A GREAT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE; BUT IN TERMS OF ACCOMPLISHING SOMETHING FOR THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES IT WAS A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT. I CAME TO THE COMMITTEE SOMEWHAT DUBIOUS ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN PLAN, BUT TOTALLY OPPOSED TO ANY SUCH MAJOR EXPENDITURE OF TAXPAYER FUNDS WITHOUT A REFERENDUM. WHEN IT BECAME OBVIOUS QUITE EARLY THAT THE COMMITTEE WAS NOT ONLY PREDISPOSED TO THE PLAN IN GENERAL, BUT AGAINST ANY SORT OF REFERENDUM, THE CONCEPT OF IT ACTUALLY BEING A "CITIZENS COMMITTEE" WAS IN SERIOUS QUESTION. THE CONTEMPT THAT HAS BEEN EXPRESSED FOR THE CITIZENS' RIGHTS OR ABILITIES TO DECIDE HOW THEIR TAX MONEY SHOULD BE SPENT, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE, EXPRESSED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMITTEE, HAS BEEN MOST DISAPPOINTING AND DISILLUSIONING TO ME.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE PLAN IS CONTROVERSIAL. IT EMBODIES THE CONCEPT OF A COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY WITH POWERS FAR BEYOND WHAT GOVERNMENTAL POWERS HAVE BEEN ASSUMED TO BE IN OUR DEMOCRACY, AND THEN KEPT SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM BOTH LEGISLATIVE AND VOTER SCRUTINY OR INTERFERENCE.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE WORD "BLIGHT" CAN BE EASILY UNDERSTOOD BY THE AVERAGE CITIZEN, EXCEPT THAT "BLIGHT" TO A CRA IS, UNBELIEVABLY, ANYTHING THAT THEY CHOOSE TO DEFINE AS BLIGHT. THERE IS NO SQUARE INCH OF PROPERTY ANYWHERE THAT CANNOT BE DEFINED AS BLIGHTED AND CONDEMNED THROUGH THE RIGHT OF EMINENT DOMAIN. THE MOST VALUABLE AREA OF PROPERTY IN LOS ANGELES, THE "Gold Coast" ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE CBD, IS INCLUDED IN THE PLAN, AND THE COMMITTEE VOTED TO CONTINUE ITS INCLUSION. THIS ALONE WILL BE TOTALLY INEXPLICABLE TO THE CITIZENRY.

AS IF THIS WAS NOT ENOUGH, THE CONCEPT OF EMINENT DOMAIN, THE RIGHT OF A GOVERNMENTAL BODY TO CONDEMN PROPERTY FOR PUBLIC USE, HAS BEEN EXPANDED BY THE CRA SO THAT THEY CAN TAKE PROPERTY FOR ANY USE. NO CITY, COUNTY, STATE, OR FEDERAL AUTHORITY CAN TAKE PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THEN TURN IT OVER TO OTHER PRIVATE PARTIES. BUT A CRA CAN, ASSEMBLING PARCELS BELONGING TO SMALL BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS INTO LARGE PARCELS TO BE SOLD TO PRIVATE DEVELOPERS, OFTEN AT WRITE-DOWN PRICES, AND WITH THE OBVIOUS POSSIBILITIES OF WINDFALL PROFITS ALONG THE WAY.

IF WE HAVE ALL BEEN TOO LONG ASSOCIATED AND TOO INVOLVED WITH THE TECHNICALITIES OF THESE CONCEPTS, THEN I SUGGEST THAT EACH ONE OF YOU GO OUT TO YOUR FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES AND TELL THEM THAT THERE IS AN AGENCY IN LOS ANGELES THAT CAN CONDEMN AS BLIGHTED ANY PIECE OF PROPERTY THEY CHOOSE, AND THEN TURN IT OVER TO ANY PRIVATE INTEREST THEY WISH, AT ANY PRICE THEY MAY DESIGNATE. IF THAT IS NOT ENOUGH, ADVISE THEM THAT THIS AGENCY, ONCE HAVING BEEN CREATED, IS ESSENTIALLY BEYOND THE CONTROL OF THE LEGISLATIVE BODY THAT CREATED IT, AND IS SUBJECT TO NO REFERENDUM BY THE VOTERS, EITHER ON A CITY OR A STATE LEVEL. IF WE ARE NOT SHOCKED BY THIS CONCEPT, LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT THE CITIZENRY AS A WHOLE WILL BE MORE THAN SHOCKED, THEY WILL BE DISBELIEVING THAT SUCH AN AGENCY AND SUCH POWERS ACTUALLY EXIST.

ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THIS "CITIZENS COMMITTEE" HAS STATED THAT THERE IS NO CHANCE OF THE PUBLIC APPROVING SUCH A PLAN IN A REFERENDUM. I AM NOT SURE IF HE IS CORRECT, BUT IF HE IS CORRECT THAT THE VOTERS WOULD NOT SUPPORT SUCH A PROJECT, THEN IT SHOULD VERY SIMPLY BE FORGOTTEN.

I HAVE LONG FELT THAT ANYONE ON A CITIZENS COMMITTEE OR ANYWHERE IN CITY HALL WHO THINKS THAT THE CITIZENS DO NOT WANT OR WILL NOT APPROVE THIS PLAN AND STILL TRIES TO ACHIEVE IT, WHO BELIEVES THAT THE VOTERS ARE OPPOSED TO SPENDING THEIR MONEY ON THIS PROJECT AND STILL IS WORKING TO SPEND THAT MONEY FOR THEM, VERY SIMPLY HAS NO PLACE IN CITY HALL OR IN CITY GOVERNMENT.

CHARGES OF POLITICS HAVE BEEN RAISED AGAINST THOSE OPPONENTS OF THE PLAN. I THINK IT CAN BE FAIRLY SAID THAT IF VOICES HAD NOT BEEN RAISED AGAINST THE PLAN IT WOULD QUIETLY HAVE SLIPPED THROUGH, AND CONVERTED MILLIONS, IF NOT BILLIONS, OF DOLLARS OF PUBLIC MONEY FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ESSENTIALLY PRIVATE INTERESTS. FOR I HAVE COME TO BELIEVE THAT THIS PLAN IS THE BIGGEST "RIPOFF", THE BIGGEST GIVEAWAY TO PRIVATE INTERESTS, SINCE THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY WAS ANNEXED TO LOS ANGELES IN THE EARLY PART OF THIS CENTURY, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING HUGE PROFITS FOR THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS INTERESTS.

TO DECLARE BLIGHTED ALL OF DOWNTOWN, INCLUDING THE MAGNIFICENT NEW SKYSCRAPERS SO ALL AREAS OF L.A. MUST PAY FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF PROPERTY INTERESTS IN THIS ONE PART OF TOWN, IS MORE THAN A MINOR SCANDAL.

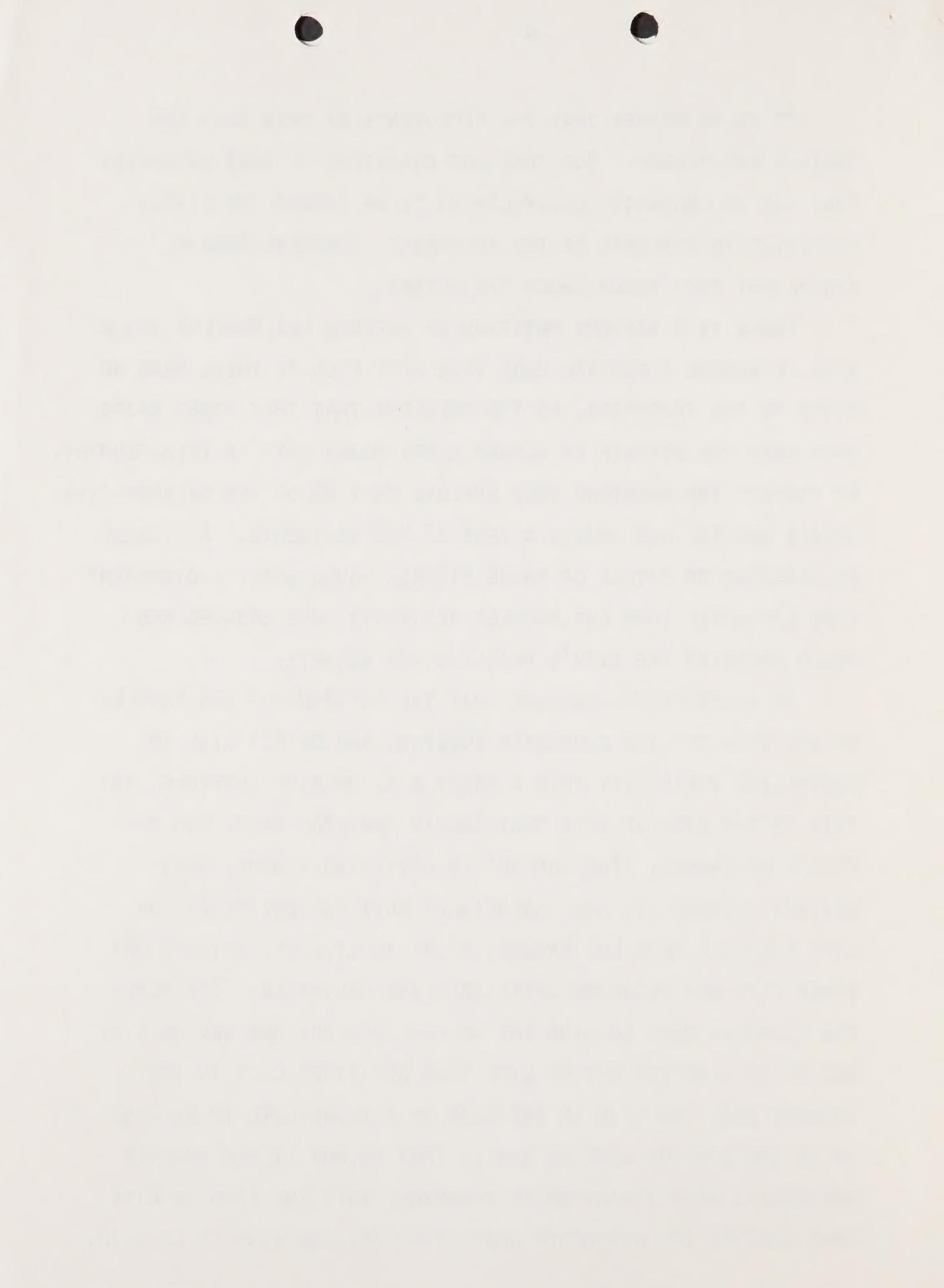
IF THE EXPERIENCE OF BUNKER HILL, WHICH AFTER ALL THESE YEARS REMAINS FAR MORE THAN HALF WEED FILLED RAW LAND AND HAS SO VASTLY ALREADY EXCEEDED ITS ORIGINAL BUDGET, HAS NOT SHOWN US THAT THIS NEW PROJECT WILL COST TEN TIMES AS MUCH AND TAKE TEN TIMES AS LONG AS ORIGINALLY ESTIMATED, AND WOULD BE THE KIND OF EXPENSIVE GOVERNMENTAL MONSTROSITY THAT HAS BROUGHT NEW YORK CITY TO ITS KNEES, THEN NOTHING EVER WILL.

the first time in the history of the world, the
whole of the human race has been gathered
together in one place, and that is the
present meeting of the World's Fair.
The great number of people here
from all parts of the globe, and the
large amount of money spent by them
in their visits to the various
exhibitions, is a clear proof of the
success of the Fair.
The exhibits themselves are
of great interest and value,
and the general atmosphere
is one of enthusiasm and
optimism.
The future of the world
looks bright and promising,
and the progress made
in science and industry
during the past century
is truly remarkable.
The World's Fair is
a fitting occasion for
us to reflect upon
the great achievements
of our forefathers
and to look forward
with hope and confidence
to the future.
We must always
remember that
we are the inheritors
of a rich legacy
from those who
came before us,
and that it is
our duty to
preserve and
enhance this
legacy for
the benefit
of future
generations.

IT IS NO WONDER THAT THE PROONENTS OF THIS PLAN ARE AGAINST REFERENDUM, FOR THEY ARE COMMITTED TO COST ESTIMATES THAT ARE SO UNREALISTICALLY LOW AS TO BE ABSURD AND FIRMLY COMMITTED TO CONCEPTS OF TAX INCREMENT, EMINENT DOMAIN, AND BLIGHT THAT WOULD SHOCK THE VOTERS.

THERE IS A SERIOUS QUESTION OF WHETHER LOS ANGELES WOULD WISH TO BECOME A CENTRAL CORE TYPE CITY EVEN IF THERE WERE NO COSTS TO THE TAXPAYERS, AS THE PROBLEMS THAT THAT MIGHT BRING HAVE BEEN THE DESPAIR OF ALMOST EVERY MAJOR CITY IN THIS COUNTRY. AT PRESENT THE DOWNTOWN AREA EMPLOYS ONLY 4% OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA'S WORKERS AND HOUSES A MERE 13,000 RESIDENTS. A SIZABLE ENLARGEMENT OF EITHER OF THESE FIGURES WOULD BRING A DIFFERENT TYPE LIFESTYLE THAN LOS ANGELES RESIDENTS HAVE ENJOYED AND WOULD INCREASE THE CITY'S PROBLEMS AND BUDGETS.

IT IS PERFECTLY OBVIOUS THAT THE CITIZENS OF LOS ANGELES DO NOT WISH TO LIVE CLUSTERED TOGETHER AND DO NOT WISH TO CENTRALIZE THEIR CITY INTO A GREAT BIG, MASSIVE DOWNTOWN, BUT THIS IS THE KIND OF CITY THAT CALVIN HAMILTON WANTS AND THE PUBLIC BE DAMNED. THE CONCEPT IS ANTI-SINGLE HOME, ANTI-PRIVATE AUTOMOBILE, AND ESSENTIALLY ANTI THE ENTIRE WAY OF LIFE THAT HAS MADE LOS ANGELES A JOY TO LIVE IN, WHILE EVERY OTHER CITY WAS BECOMING UNFEASIBLE AND UNLIVABLE. THE PLANS THE PLANNERS HAVE IN MIND FOR US WILL DESTROY OUR WAY OF LIFE, AND IT IS A BETTER WAY OF LIFE THAN ANY OTHER CITY IN THE COUNTRY HAS. WE LIVE IN THE KIND OF CITY WE LIVE IN BECAUSE IT IS THE KIND OF CITY WE WANT. THAT IS WHY IT HAS EVOLVED NATURALLY, WITH A MINIMUM OF PLANNING, INTO THE KIND OF CITY THAT MOST OF ITS RESIDENTS WANT IT BE, AND WISH TO LIVE IN.



WRITING IN LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE A FEW MONTHS AGO JEANNIE KASINDORF SAYS, "THEN THE NEW MIGRANTS BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT IT IS JUST BECAUSE OF THE OLD CLICHE - '19 SUBURBS IN SEARCH OF A CITY' - THAT THEY LIVE IN A CITY THAT IS STILL ALIVE. FOR THE NEW YORK CITY DEFAULT CRISIS HAS MADE IT MORE APPARENT THAN EVER THAT IN RE-THINKING THE WAY AN AMERICAN CITY SHOULD BE BUILT, WE HAVE IN OUR OWN HIT AND MISS FASHION, CREATED A CITY THAT CONSIDERS PEOPLE FIRST. A CITY WHERE PEOPLE HAVE THEIR OWN INDIVIDUAL SPACE. AND IN SO DOING, THE LOS ANGELES SPRAWL, FOR YEARS THE LAUGHING STOCK OF THE NEW YORK CHIC ELITE, HAS KEPT THE MIDDLE CLASS WAGE EARNING POPULATION WITHIN CITY BOUNDS, GIVING LOS ANGELES THE TAX BASE THAT NEW YORK AND OTHER CEMENT AND CONCRETE CITIES LOST YEARS AGO."

THE COMMITTEE HAS CHOSEN TO OVERLOOK THE MOST OBVIOUS OF PROBLEMS. THE CRA IS COMMITTED NOT TO A PLAN, BUT TO A "PROCESS". THIS IS A FANCY WAY OF SAYING THAT THEY REFUSE TO PRESENT TO THE COMMITTEE OR TO THE CITY COUNCIL EITHER A LIST OR PRIORITIES FOR PROJECTS OR, OF COURSE, ANY ESTIMATE OF THEIR COSTS. THIS IS SO ABSURD THAT IT IS SMALL WONDER THAT THEY FEAR GOING TO THE VOTERS WITH SUCH A "PROCESS". IT IS AMAZING THAT THEY HAVE THE COURAGE TO GO BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL REQUESTING MAJOR AMOUNTS OF MONEY WITHOUT ANY INFORMATION AS TO WHAT IT IS TO BE SPENT ON OR HOW MUCH WILL BE SPENT. IT IS SMALL WONDER, THEREFORE, THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF CITIZENS ARE CONTEMPTUOUS OF THE PLAN, AND THE PROONENTS OF THE PLAN ARE FEARFUL OF A REFERENDUM.



THE COMMITTEE VOTED NO REFERENDUM, VOTED TO LEAVE ALL THE NEW MAJOR BUILDINGS IN THE BLIGHTED AREA. VOTED NO FINANCIAL OR TIME LIMIT ON THE PROJECT, WAS UNABLE TO FIND WHAT WAS PROPOSED OR HOW MUCH IT WOULD COST, (SO COULD HARDLY DETERMINE HOW MUCH IT WOULD COST THE TAXPAYERS), DECIDED IT WAS NOT THEIR JOB TO TAKE ACTION ON RECOMMENDED REFORMS IN THE LEGISLATION, AND TOOK NO ACTION ON PROVIDING ANY CHECKS ON THE PLAN SUCH AS EXAMINING THE POWER OF EMINENT DOMAIN, A LIMITATION ON THE DEFINITION OF BLIGHT, OR ANY REFORMS OR CHECKS ON THE CRA ITSELF.

LOOKING BACK AT THIS UNENVIABLE RECORD IT IS HARD TO SEE WHAT CAME OUT OF SIX MONTHS OF INTENSIVE HEARINGS. GRANTED WE ALL LEARNED A LOT AND PERHAPS BECAME EXPERT, BUT WE THEN DID NOT ACT, WE DID NOT DO ANYTHING AT ALL WITH OUR KNOWLEDGE, AND SO HAVE DONE NOTHING MORE THAN TAKE THE HEAT OFF THE PROJECT FOR SIX MONTHS AND THEN DUMP THE PROBLEM BACK INTO THE LAPS OF THE CITY COUNCIL, WHERE IT PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE BEEN RESOLVED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THE MOST PROMISING OF ALL THE DEVELOPMENTS THIS YEAR HAS BEEN THE CITY COUNCIL'S DECISION TO DRAFT AN ORDINANCE TO CONSTITUTE THEMSELVES THE CRA (AS MOST OTHER CITY COUNCILS ARE). IT IS ONLY BY THIS ACTION THAT THE PROPER CONTROLS CAN BE BROUGHT BACK TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS, AND BECOME RESPONSIBLE TO THE WILL OF THE VOTERS. THE COMMITTEE, LIKE THE CRA ITSELF, HAD NO RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC AND THEREFORE WAS IRRESPONSIBLE. THE COMMITTEE ASKED ALL THE QUESTIONS BUT GOT FEW ANSWERS, AND THOSE ANSWERS IT DID GET, CHOSE TO IGNORE IN ITS FINAL CONCLUSIONS. I CANNOT



URGE ANYTHING MORE STRONGLY THAN THAT THE CITY COUNCIL BECOME THE CRA, THEREFORE PUTTING THE PUBLIC INTO THE PROCESS, AND ENABLING THE CITY COUNCIL TO DEMAND THE ANSWERS AND ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEM.

ONCE THE COUNCIL-CRA HAS THE ANSWERS, AND PUT THEM IN PROPER PROSPECTIVE, SOMETHING THE COMMITTEE NEVER DID, THEY ARE THEN IN A POSITION TO DO SOMETHING THAT CAN BE DONE IN NO OTHER WAY: TO GO BEFORE THE PUBLIC WITH AN ADVISORY REFERENDUM FOR A REASONABLE PLAN THAT CAN BE REASONABLY EXPLAINED TO THE VOTERS, AND THEN TO ABIDE BY THE RESULTS OF THE VOTERS' DECISION.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT WE MUST DO IS THE CURING OF OBVIOUS URBAN BLIGHT, THE SHODDY CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH MANY PEOPLE MUST LIVE. BUT THESE WE CAN DO WITHOUT A MASSIVE PLAN THAT DEALS PRIMARILY WITH THINGS THAT SHOULD BE THE CONCERN AND CARE OF THE ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS INTERESTS OF THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY, BECAUSE THEY PRIMARILY DEAL WITH THE ENHANCEMENT OF THEIR PROPERTY VALUES AND THEIR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES WITH OTHER PARTS OF OUR CITY.

THE CITY COUNCIL WILL FIND IN THE COURSE OF ITS DELIBERATIONS MANY RESPONSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE CRA TYPE PLAN, WHICH IS PRIMARILY GEARED TO THE DESIRES OF THE COMMERCIAL INTERESTS. IT IS NOT THE TAXPAYERS' RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESSMAN'S INTERESTS, AND THIS HAS BEEN THE MAIN THRUST OF THE PLAN.



BUT LOS ANGELES HAS JUST GONE THROUGH THE MOST ACTIVE PERIOD OF DOWNTOWN BUILDING IN ITS HISTORY, AND BUILDINGS ARE STILL RISING. BOTH JOBS AND ASSESSED VALUATION HAVE RISEN IN THE CBD, AND THERE IS NO REASON TO SUBSIDIZE THIS ASPECT OF DOWNTOWN. THERE IS ONLY A SMALL RESIDENT POPULATION IN THE CBD, SO THE NEED FOR HOUSING IS MINIMAL (NOT THAT TAX INCREMENT FINANCING HAS EVER PRODUCED A SINGLE UNIT OF HOUSING IN CALIFORNIA).

THERE ARE MANY NEEDS TO BE MET, AND ALL CAN BE MET WITHIN THE NORMAL FRAMEWORKS OF OUR CREATIVE CITY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE. IF WE REQUIRE DENSITY REDUCTION THEN ZONING CAN DO THE JOB. IF WE HAVE OLD BUILDINGS THAT ARE DANGEROUS OR EARTHQUAKE VULNERABLE, THIS CAN BE CURED BY PROPER ENFORCEMENT OF THE BUILDING CODES AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS. SKID ROW CAN BE CLEANED UP BY FEDERAL MONIES OR BY AN IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, ALONG WITH PROPER CODE ENFORCEMENT. THE NEEDS FOR LOW RENT HOUSING AND PARKS IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA CAN BE PROVIDED BY A 50-50 COMBINATION OF AN ASSESSMENT DISTRICT AND GENERAL FUND MONIES IN ADDITION TO THE POSSIBILITY OF BLOCK GRANT FUNDS.

IN SHORT, THERE ARE PROBLEMS DOWNTOWN WHICH SHOULD PROPERLY BE CURED BY THE CITIZENS AND CAN BE HANDLED BY THE CITY COUNCIL WITHOUT THE MONSTER OF THE MASSIVE DOWNTOWN PLAN. THE PROBLEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN ONE BY ONE AND CAN BE SOLVED ONE BY ONE.



IT WAS THE JOB OF THE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO REPRESENT THE RIGHTS AND NEEDS OF THE CITIZENS OF LOS ANGELES. IN THIS THEY HAVE SIMPLY FAILED. THE CITY COUNCIL MUST TAKE MATTERS INTO ITS OWN HANDS BY BECOMING THE CRA, INSISTING ON THE ANSWERS, EVALUATING THE NEED FOR A PLAN, AND IF DETERMINING THERE IS SUCH A NEED, SUBMIT IT TO THE VOTERS, IN THE FULL FAITH THAT THE VOTERS WHO BUILT AND SUPPORT THIS, THE GREATEST CITY IN THE NATION, WHO ELECTED THE COUNCILMEN WHO WILL BE SITTING AS THE CRA, WHO WILL PROVIDE THEIR HARD EARNED MONIES FOR ANY PROJECT IF ADOPTED, ARE THE ONLY ULTIMATE PROPER SOURCE FOR THE FINAL DECISION IN A PROJECT OF SUCH MASSIVE FINANCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR FUTURE.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

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